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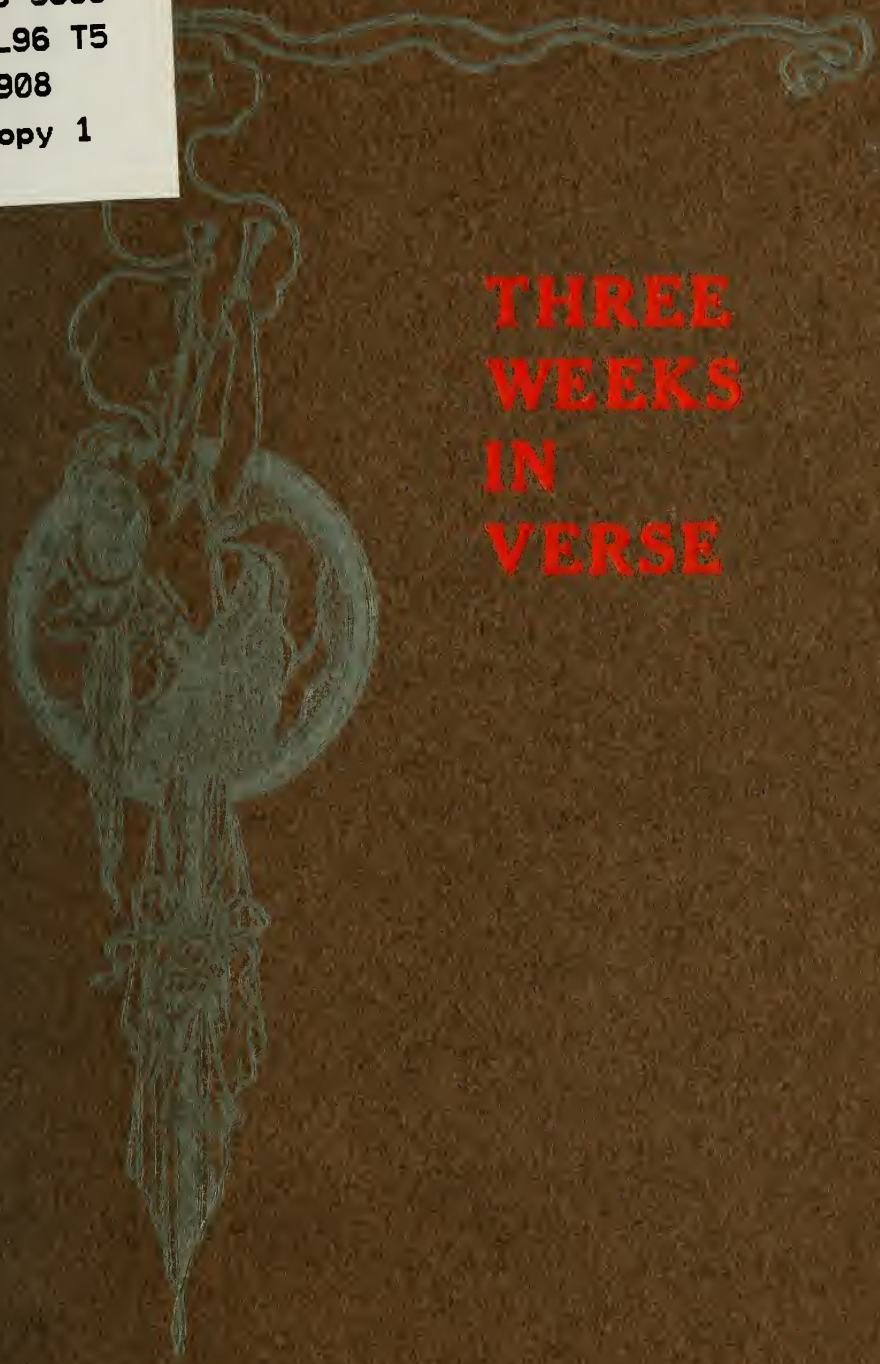

THREE WEEKS IN VERSE

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IN VERSE

A Strenuous History

By J. W. CLOUD

Three Weeks In Verse

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THREE WEEKS

IN VERSE

FIRST WEEK

I saw her first upon the "Great White Way"
And morn to evening changed and night to day,
And dull December's chill to jocund June,
While earth seemed heaven and all in sweet attune.
A fairy princess dancing on a beam
Loaned by the roving, vagrant moon would seem
No lighter in her suppleness and grace,
As through the avenue I saw her trace
Her dainty steps, and followed guiltily
Until we came unto that hostelry
Whose fame for splendor all the earth excels
And where the fount of joy unceasing wells.
Within its portals vast I made my way

Three Weeks In Verse

In mad pursuit, nor certain death could stay
My wild intent to feast my starving eyes
And yield my soul to dreams of paradise.
Anon I reach the ornate room of palm
And bid the tumult of my heart be calm,
Ere it betray to all assembled there
My secret which with no one I would share.
And there she sat, her loveliness supreme,
The fairest jewel in the dazzling scheme;
Imagination swayed my frenzied mind
And whispered softly, " 'Tis a saint enshrined."
Spirit of beauty! I never hoped to see
So fair a flower of sweet divinity;
Every joy the angels ever knew,
Every charm the master artists strew
Upon their canvasses depicting grace
Were limned upon her lovely, radiant face.
Alone she dines, alone she leaves the room;
I rise and follow, bent upon my doom.
Ere yet a dozen faltering steps I take,
She drops upon the floor a snowy flake—
A dainty card, embossed with royal crest,
And 'neath the name, these lines to me addressed;
"I fear thou art a foolish boy, my Paul,
But still this day a week, I bid thee call."
What storms then lashed the ocean of my brain;
Reason, it's moorings broke, and all in vain
Did sober Caution strive to make her fast,

Until the hurricane of passion passed,
But strove with rash, impetuous, foolish haste,
The honeyed joys of heaven at once to taste.
Disdaining fear, at once with quickened pace,
I reach the sweet embodiment of grace,
And beg a word to ease my aching heart,
Which love has pierced so deeply with his dart.
"Not now, my Paul, nor ever shall it be
Unless you yield to me implicity.
Command thy will, whatever be the cost;
A single breach and everything is lost."
A tender glance, for which my soul I'd pawn,
A seraph's smile, and now my love is gone.
The hours are days, the days eternities,
Old Sol is laden with infirmities;
And crawls with snail-pace through the dome of blue,
While all on earth partakes a laden hue;
And all the tedious time I vainly strive,
Nor can I e'en the slightest clue contrive
To solve the secret of the radiant one
Who dims the splendor of the noonday sun.

SECOND WEEK

At last the seven days have reached their end;
And shall I now to heavenly heights ascend,
Or plunge to Pluto's black and noisome shore,
Despair my destiny forever more?
E'en while I ponder in this frenzied state,

Three Weeks In Verse

Now cold in doubt, now fired with hope, elate,
The tinkling bell proclaims a messenger ;
Propitious fate, Oh may it be from her !
Oh, bless thee, Eros, thou shalt ever be
The god to whom I pledge my fealty ;
Thy potency alone hath wrought the charm
That banished from my soul its dire alarm
And swayed my love to do thy bidding sweet,
And with this missive all my bliss complete ;
"Dear foolish, verdant Paul, it pleaseth me
To spend a week with nature and with thee ;
Come with the boy who brings this little note,
And he will guide thee where a tiny boat
Shall bear us to a fairy, flowery isle,
Where I shall tease and flatter and beguile
With all the arts I've learned at Venus' court,
Which well you know are varied in their sort."
Now haste we to the charming trysting place,
And as we speed the tightened cords unlace
That long have bound my heart and checked its bliss,
While wondering o'er the barren plains of Dis.
Anticipation fires with ecstacies
My pregnant soul until felicities
All the fibres of my being permeate,
And all unto my queen I consecrate.
And now at last we reach the sheltered quay
That juts a little in the argent sea,
And tossing lightly is the dainty craft

That to the haven of delight shall waft
My love and me ; and should it ne'er return,
Contented would I be and no more yearn
To leave the spot she's chosen for our tryst,
That isle of paradise, by sea-waves kissed.
And there beneath a silken canopy,
O ! blissful sight ! My soul's idolatry
Upon a tawny tiger's skin reclines,
And greets me with a smile that far outshines
The sweetness of the fabled angel's face,
Alight with glory of celestial grace.
She bids me share with her the cushioned seat,
And stretches forth a jeweled hand, petite,
Of snowy whiteness, blue-veined, warm and soft,
Whose contact sends at once my soul aloft,
To where the Empyrean fires brightly glow,
And cast their luster on the Alpine snow.
And now the little bark puts forth with glee
Across the surface of the rippling sea ;
The very waves share in our holiday
And toss with ecstacy the milky spray ;
While softly through the sails the breezes sing
Their requiems of love that sweetly ring.
Then thus my love: "Come tell me baby Paul,
What foolish whim thus tempts to risk your all ?
Surely the perils of these wild affairs
Have oft been cited by your wise forebears ;
Shall we not put about ere it's too late,

While still there's naught we fain would mitigate?
Your boyish fancy soon would find it's level,
And e'er rejoice that you had shunned this evil."
Then I: "I swear by all that I exalt,
By all that's sacred 'neath this azure vault,
That did I know that thou wert but a siren,
And leading me to that condign environ
Where brave Ulysses' crew was led for slaughter,
And sunk beneath Aegean's briny water,
Still should I say 'This joy I'll not resign,
To wander back and ever to repine.
The voyage that we've started on today,
My will is that it should go on for aye'."
"Well spoken, Paul; well said, my handsome boy,
And if one little kiss you would enjoy,
And satisfied with it as a reward,
'Tis your's when we're alone upon the sward."
And now we reach the "Isle of Happiness,"
It having pleased my love to thus address
This tiny, verdant jewel of the sea,
Plucked from the fairest field of Arcady,
And planted here the beauty to enhance
Of oceans vast and glittering expanse.
Our sailor boy now springs upon the beach
And drags the boat beyond the breakers' reach;
Then we alight, my radiant queen and I,
And instantly our eager eyes descry
A sylvan dell where blood-red roses blow,

And hyacinths and dainty blue-bells grow;
And stately ferns and graceful, trellised vines;
And everywhere the odor of sweet pines.
A spot indeed to tempt Persephone,
And Bacchus and his merry company;
Or Huntress Dian, fair iconoclast,
Who wrought such direful havoc in the past
Within the thrifty Ceres' rich domain,
And won herself the husbandmen's disdain.
And now ensconced within the magic grot,
That seems by fairies' nimble fingers wrought,
With rugs and cushions spread upon the grass,
Our happy state doth all on earth surpass.
In sweet repose we sat a little while,
And then she coyly whispers with a smile,
"My baby Paul disdains his kiss to claim,
Or possibly he fears to risk the flame;
Or, yet, perchance, he wishes me to woo,
If so, do thou but bill and I will coo."
Thus challenged, in a moment I remove
The stigma and would further prove
My right of title to the Squire of Dames,
Who fears nor Circe's wiles nor Cupid's flames,
But on her countenance I note a change;
Upon the instant o'er its lovely range,
A cloud of sadness spreads its darksome wings,
And in her twin-star eyes a teardrop springs.
" 'Tis now my mood that we should speak, dear Paul,

About the fate that holds me in its thrall.
If from the archives I should lift the seal,
And to the world my history reveal,
No advocate should I require to plead
Extenuation for a single deed ;
The past would justify my present course,
And none would wonder that I scorn remorse.
Suffice for thee, dear Paul, when bare fifteen,
They wed me to a titled libertine ;
Nor prayers nor tears could save me from the fate
Demanded by the exigence of State.
Three score years and ten my consort's age,
And far advanced upon the senile stage ;
Of withered feature and decrepit mind,
Of adder—deafness too and almost blind ;
His constant fear, some act of treachery,
And loathsome in his love of lechery.
To take a tender child thus from her dolls,
And wed her to senility, oppalls
The soul, and makes the tie a mockery,
And casts a blot upon fair chastity.
For five long years this state I have endured,
Within this monster's prison-house immured,
And now no power on earth shall e'er compel
Me further to abide in that vile hell.
I yearn, I hope, I pray, I live for love,
Nor all the gods below, nor those above
Shall keep me from my rightful heritage,

Nor loose my purpose from its anchorage.
Shall I obey the foul unjust decree,
That binds me to this rank iniquity,
To please the smug and narrow, prudish sect,
Whose doctrine is that whom their gods select
To be our mates, we should unto them cleave,
And all congenial, loyal friends deceive
With chilling look and other false pretence,
That indicate a cold indifference?
Can it be true that such is heaven's decree,
That God demands of me fidelity
To that insensate, horrid, brutish beast;
To stand aloof forever from the feast
Of happiness with which the world abounds;
Stop up my ears to all earth's pleasant sounds,
Deprive my eyes of every blissful sight;
Deny my soul a thrill, however slight;
Seal up my heart in panoplies of ice,
Or else resign my hopes of paradise?
A thousand noes my answer to this code,
That shuts forever from the blest abode
All those with blood aglow with passion's fire,
Who yield indulgence to their fond desire.
Let those united by affinity,
Whose every heart-beat throbs with ecstacy,
Who cull the sweetest flowers from Love's domain,
And in the honeyed sting of passion's pain
Find all the grief unto their lives assigned,

To whom all things are perfect bliss refined,
Be not the ones my lot to pass upon ;
But let a fair, impartial jury be drawn
From those who with disgust and poignant dread
Have shared with hateful foe the nuptial bed."
And thus with eloquence she pleads her cause,
And hurls defiance at the unjust laws
That bind the innocent to straightened paths,
While sneering License sweeps untrammeled swaths
Across the flowery fields of pleasure,
And weeping Honor mourns her sacred treasure.
And then with lightning speed her mood's reversed ;
With merry, laughing eyes and sweet lips pursed,
In baby plaintiveness she begs a kiss,
And long our souls vibrate in perfect bliss.
Meanwhile our sailor boy has pitched the tent
And placed the stores of dainty aliment ;
And now his duties for the day being o'er,
He sails away to spend the night on shore,
And leaves the isle to Vashti and to me ;
O ! perfect dream of pure felicity !
Long time we sat and watched the little bark
Until it faded in the gathering dark ;
And still we sat and listened to the waves,
As breaking o'er the beach in rhythmic staves,
They sang so sweet a lullaby of peace,
That soon our tired senses sought release,
And gentle slumber carried them away,
And ne'er returned until the break of day.

Three Weeks In Verse

When I awake a golden voiced canary
Trills a tender missive, light and airy,
That fills the ambient air around, above,
With passion-laden music sweet as love.
And then far sweeter still I heard the call,
"And art thou still asleep, my baby Paul?
O ! let me hear thee speak for loves' sweet sake ;
My lazy Paul, the last one to awake?
See where the sun just risen in the east
Hath spread again his rich, diurnal feast ;
The great cerulean, vaulted canopy,
The gorgeous sheen of green and purple sea,
The silver throated birds, the hum of bees,
The parti-colored flowers, the waving trees,
Invite our souls to come and take their fill,
And leave the banquet at our own sweet will.
But if thou art not pleased to taste of this,
Accept a fond embrace and luscious kiss."
And thus began the second happy day;
O would this blissful state could last for aye.
This day, the pleasant hours to beguile,
'Twas our resolve to search the little isle ;
Explore its wondrous depths, and hoist the flag
Of Love upon its mountain's highest crag.
And now with mimic pomp and circumstance
The brave explorers to their task advance ;
My dainty love, the color-bearer she,
The rank and file she has assigned to me.
Through labyrinth of brake and tangled vine,

Three Weeks In Verse

O'er pleasant fields bedecked with columbine,
O'er hill and dale and flowery mead we stray,
Our spirits blithe as happy babes at play.
The golden sun in his meridian,
Beholds us in a vale Arcadian
Through which a tiny, tinkling, silvery rill
Pursues its course with many a merry trill.
Upon the bosom of its mossy bank,
Exhausted from our long pursuit we sank,
Her lovely head reposing on my breast,
Kind slumber comes and lulls our souls to rest.
When from the sweet siesta we awake,
A lark and linnet in a neighboring brake,
The air besprinkle with a liquid song
That fills with envy all the forest's throng.
A thousand rare perfumes the flowers yield,
Which gentle zephyrs waft from velvet field ;
The cloudless sky bestows an azure smile,
And sweet content pervades our happy isle.
The fleeting hours are spent ere we return
In weaving garlands fair of flower and fern,
While from the storehouse of her mind outpour
Sweet stories, anecdotes and fabled lore ;
Weird tales of goblins, dryades and sprites
Whose very names the peasant's soul affrights.
The moon has risen o'er the shimmering sea
And sheds a charm of sweet placidity
Upon our haven in the little grot,
That thrills our hearts as we approach the spot.

And now the pangs of hunger to assuage,
The chafing-dish, my queen and I engage,
And such a rich refection we prepare
As would delight an epicure to share.
And when 'tis finished underneath the trees,
A fragrant cigarette completes my ease.
My love reclines upon her tiger skin,
And on her lap a tiny mandolin,
With which she wakes such cadenced melodies,
And strange, impassioned soulful rhapsodies,
Would charm the senses of an anchorite,
E'en fill the heart of hatred with delight.
And when I beg a little song of love,
With all the grace and beauty of a dove,
She moves her lips and liquid-accents pour,
That cause my ravished soul to rise and soar,
And think of those angelic harmonies
We hear when dreams transport us to the skies.
And now the long pent storm of passion breaks;
Each nerve and fibre of my being shakes
As does an aspen leaf on being stirred
By wand'ring zephyr or by wing of bird.
Her sylph-like form I seize in mad embrace,
And rain a thousand kisses on her face.
Her snowy arms about my neck she casts,
Her bosom throbs, her breath in torrid blasts,
Perfumed as with some oriental scent,
Completes my frenzied spirit's ravishment;

And all her honeyed sweets are mine to kiss,
Each gentle contact thrills my heart with bliss,
My senses melt, consumed by passion's fire,
And still the flames are fed by fierce desire.
"O ! sweet quintessence of perfected love !
O saint incarnate from the skies above !
And art thou mine, and dost thou yield the prize
Of greater worth than joys of paradise?
For answer to my mad, impassioned plea,
She loosed her clasp and struggled to be free,
And cried, "Oh save me! Save me, Paul! My darling Paul!"
Then swooned and fell, e'en as dead bodies fall.
And then, indeed I thought that I should faint,
To hear at such a time so strange a plaint ;
'Tis surely not in keeping with the creed
So late expressed, that justified the deed,
That spurned the laws to which tradition yields,
And claimed the right to roam forbidden fields.
What meant those agonizing, pleading cries?
Can it be true that here a virgin lies,
Or is it but some wanton subtlety
To thus assume the role of chastity?
E'en thus while questioning my puzzled mind,
She moves her lips and moans, " Oh Paul, be kind ;
If only for another day refrain,
And you shall act your will when I explain."
With such sincerity she utters this,
I plant upon her lips a tender kiss,

And say "Fear not, sweet one, I'll guard thee well,
And on the morrow, if it please thee, tell
Me all the meaning of this mystery,
Which holds no counterpart in history."
As thus my heart-felt feelings I expressed,
Again she threw herself upon my breast,
And once again her lovely bosom throbs,
But now as if 'twould burst with anguished sobs;
Her eyes, twin fountains now that overflow
With scalding tears that all confirm her woe.
With soothing words I led her to the tent
And sought with gentle, kindly argument
To bring assurance to her troubled mind:
"Although I grope in darkness, being blind
As to the reason of this strange affair,
Believe me, dear, 'tis not beyond repair."
"And can you still address me as your dear?
Then, darling Paul, now my confession hear:
'Twas very simple, how I learned your name;
I chanced to be a witness at the game
Your college played, in which you took a part
And there it was you first impressed my heart.
When I beheld you next in the hotel,
My primal thought was that if it befell
That our two paths of life should ever meet,
That I should find in you a soul replete
With all the qualities I dearly prize.
Nor even when I saw your burning eyes,

Was I deceived in thinking all was lust,
Which, had it been, would have destroyed my trust.
It seemed as if a voice from heaven came,
"Behold the one to save thee from thy shame."
What must have seemed a wanton, sensual freak,
To dwell with you upon this isle a week,
Was but a ruse to gain my liberty,
And quit this legalized impurity,
That makes of me a servile, hateful slave,
While for a pure, congenial love I crave.
I reasoned thus: the carl will flee the shame
Thus cast upon his high ancestral name,
And in the face of such strong evidence,
To which I would not raise the least defence,
The law would free me from the hated tie,
Than which to longer bear, I fain would die.
And now, I own I cannot pay the price;
At first it seemed an easy sacrifice
To play the wanton for a little while,
With careless, flippant speech and brazen smile,
But now my poor philosophy has flown,
And left me in this sad plight all alone."
As thus the beauties of her mind unfold,
I see displayed a wealth of burnished gold,
And in the chamber of her heart I see
Enshrined a soul of matchless rarity.
"I beg you say not, all alone, sweetheart,
While I am here to champion your part.

We'll break the bonds that bind you to this churl,
And you shall be again a happy girl;
But only just so long as you elect,
As I suggest we form a little sect
Whose membership shall be composed of two,
A simple layman, I, high priestess, you,
And in the ritual that we prepare,
My daily duty shall be to declare
"By all that's sacred 'neath the azure sky,
Thou art my queen and thee I deify."
To this I wish to add but one word more;
That you shall be my bride, not paramour.
The law will not demand a further proof
Than that we spent a week beneath this roof,
And when the sojourn ends and you go free,
It shall be with untarnished chastity,
To face the world and wait the happy day,
When all the hated barriers burned away,
We'll plight our troth to an eternity
Of blissful love and sweet felicity."
"Oh bless thee, Paul, and how my happy heart
Rejoiceth that from thee I must not part;
Then I, a husband's honest love shall know,
And you, fidelity as white as snow,
And I shall know the bliss of motherhood,
Aud you, dear Paul, the pride of fatherhood,
And all the world shall know it seeks in vain
To find upon our lives a single stain."

All thoughts of lustful action now dispelled,
Our chastened hearts with pure affection swelled;
E'en sweeter than before, the soft caress,
And more intense the kiss of tenderness.
And now to consummate our cunning plot,
And free my love from her distasteful lot,
We caused our sailor boy to bear the tale
To certain ones who would at once assail
The ears of him who ne'er would bear the shame,
And would be glad to abrogate his claim.

THIRD WEEK

And just as we had planned it came to pass,
That once again my love became a lass.
The very day the week came to an end,
A legal writ, demanding she attend
The august court was brought us by the boy,
And filled our souls with happiness and joy.
The law's decree secured, at once we hie
Unto a dominie, and bid him tie
Our loving hearts in Hymen's holy knot.
Then once again we seek the little grot
Upon the blessed "Isle of Happiness,"
To spend our honeymoon, as you may guess;
And such another week of sweet content,
Has ne'er been witnessed on this firmament.

[THE END]

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